



## Research report

Popular discourse on nutrition, health and indulgence in Flanders, 1945–1960<sup>☆,☆☆</sup>

Anneke Geyzen

Social and Cultural Food Studies (FOST), Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

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## ABSTRACT

Ever since Belgian scientists started to investigate the working classes' diet at the beginning of the twentieth century, popular media has shown traces of researchers' scientific findings in one way or another. This article investigates whether or not nutritional knowledge was translated into comprehensible food practices on a household level in postwar Flanders. The culinary pages of *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*, a widespread monthly magazine published by the Belgian Farmer Women's Association, was subjected to a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The analysis showed that even though *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* revealed several traces of a certain nutritional knowledge, scientific discourse was not translated into ready-to-use recipes or cooking techniques during the immediate postwar years. It was only in the 1950s that women were educated on the function and importance of various nutrients and that nutritional knowledge was actually converted into rather specific daily menus and new ways of preparation. Interestingly, the references to health were countered by references to indulgence as well, especially during festive occasions. The article finishes by exploring whether or not both types of references could be combined in one way or another.

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## Introduction

Contemporary health concerns are not only influenced by up-to-the-minute scientific nutritional knowledge, but are also shaped by sturdy food behaviour and culinary culture from times past. This article argues that present-day nutritional knowledge has undeniably been modelled by the way dietary recommendations were represented in popular media during the period 1945–1960. Indeed, plenty of dietary guidelines that came into being during this period (e.g. moderate salt and sugar consumption) still determine the way scientists and nutritionists deal with healthy food today and how they communicate their findings to the public (Anderson, Black, & Harris, 2003). Thus, the historical dimension of this article leads to more thorough and comprehensive insights on contemporary health concerns, like (the lack of) weight and body control or diseases of affluence.

Scientific knowledge reaches people through various kinds of media: governmental brochures, advertisements, home economics

textbooks, cookbooks, women's magazines, etc. The latter example proves to be an interesting source to investigate whether or not scientific discourse referring to nutritional knowledge was/is translated into sensible food practices the housewife could easily use in order to prepare a daily menu and appetising dishes. In view of this matter, this article will analyse how a widespread Flemish women's magazine, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*, represented food recommendations in Flanders between 1945 and 1960. First, it will situate the topic briefly within historiography and, consequently, this overview will demonstrate that the postwar period is in desperate need of academic attention. The second part will focus on Alan Warde's antinomies of taste in general and the antinomy of health and indulgence in particular as theoretical framework of the analysis (Warde, 1997). An overview of source material and methodology will conclude this second part. Third, the selected monthly magazine, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*, will be analysed based on Warde's antinomy and, finally, the conclusion will answer questions that surface during the analysis and will present some points for further discussion.

## Shifting discourse: from meat to vegetables

At the beginning of the twentieth century, several Belgian scientists who investigated the working classes' diet commented on labourers' insufficient caloric intake in relation to their heavy workload. They stated that labour productivity would benefit from increased meat consumption and, correspondingly, they expressed the need for more meat. By the late 1920s, the composition of the

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E-mail address: [Anneke.Geyzen@vub.ac.be](mailto:Anneke.Geyzen@vub.ac.be).

average worker's diet had altered and saw a remarkable rise in meat consumption: economic growth, increased wages and purchasing power enabled workers to buy more meat while, at the same time, the variety of meat widely expanded due to the availability of more fresh and cured meats. However, by then, the scientific discovery of vitamins at the beginning of the decade had induced a 'newer knowledge of nutrition' that undermined scientists' emphasis on the energy content of a diet. Scientific discourse changed significantly and shifted from guidelines for a plentiful meaty menu considered unhealthy to recommendations for increased vitamin-rich vegetable and fruit consumption (De Vooght, Scholliers, Teughels, & Van Den Bergh, 2009; Kamminga & Cunningham, 1995, chap. 1; Scholliers, 2008, 2010). Historical research has shown that the change in both discourse and practice was not limited to Belgium, but that a fairly analogous development emerged in the whole of North-Western Europe (Barona, 2010; Perdiguer-Gil & Castejón-Bolea, 2010; Teich, 1995, chap. 8). Research also focused on the question whether or not scientific knowledge was translated into comprehensible food practices on a household level and whether or not the mentioning of nutritional information in (popular) media equalled a certain concern for health issues (Mitchell, 2001, 2008).

In Belgium, prior to 1940, the new scientific discourse did find its way into the housewife's kitchen, but its translation into sensible food practices did not always occur. Around 1900, textbooks for home economics classes written by home economics teachers, like Louisa Mathieu, taught schoolgirls how to cook a varied, healthy and tasty, yet low-cost meal; moderate meat consumption was advocated and the use of vegetables and fruits was heavily promoted. However, the housewife was never informed of precise quantities, nor was she introduced to healthy preparation techniques (e.g. the use of fats or adequate cooking time) (Scholliers, 2010). Cookbooks also linked up with the new recommendations for a healthy diet, but in contrast to the home economics textbooks, they only vaguely mentioned the existence of vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates. An analysis of the 1941 edition of *Ons Kookboek*, a quite influential cookbook published by the Belgian Farmer Women's Association and 'a household necessity in Flanders' (Segers, 2005, p. 4), illustrates this perfectly. Whereas the introduction listed several nutrients including vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates, the cookbook lacked a thorough explanation of the importance of these nutrients for human health. Neither did the recipe section touch upon the nutritional value of the dishes it presented, nor did the number of meat recipes decrease after the introduction of the 'newer knowledge of nutrition'. Moreover, the larger part of the meat recipes contained greasy pork covered with heavy gravy or were recipes for so-called typical/traditional meat dishes known for their high caloric value (e.g. beef stew and rabbit stew). Finally, Belgian women's magazines published before World War II exhibited a growing concern with health and food as well. In the 1930s, for example, monthlies and weeklies issued several articles on the negative effects of a meaty diet on one's health and they prescribed a reduction in the consumption of meat in order to obtain/retain a slim figure, which had been an emergent concern of middle-class women prior to 1914. However, these women's magazines also paid increasing attention to festive and opulent meals (Niessen, Raymaekers, & Segers, 2002a; Scholliers, 2008, 2010; Segers, 2005).

Did the postwar period bring forth the emergence of translations of scientific discourse into sensible food practices? Historical research on these subjects has been devoted to the groundbreaking period of 1890–1940, but so far – apart from some researchers who focused on a later period (de Knecht-Van Eekelen & Van Otterloo, 2000; den Hartog, 2005; Mitchell, 2001, 2008) – the postwar history of nutrition and its conversion into daily meal patterns, menus and ready-to-use recipes has not been investigated

thoroughly (Kamminga & Cunningham, 1995, chap. 1). These historiographical lacunae undeniably lead to several intriguing questions that are worth investigating: Did scientific discourse change significantly after World War II? Did the dietary recommendations change and did they become more explicit after 1945? How were housewives 'educated' on postwar nutritional knowledge and did a translation into sensible food practices finally take place? In short, how did discourse on healthy food develop after 1945?

## Health and indulgence

In his book *Consumption, food and taste. Culinary antinomies and commodity culture*, sociologist Alan Warde conducted a comparative study of the culinary discourses of recipe columns in British women's magazines at two different moments in time, namely 1968 and 1992. He concluded that the recipe promotion devices – i.e. short or longer texts that recommend certain recipes or series of recipes to the magazines' readers – in these columns were based on four antinomies of taste: novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, convenience and care, and economy and extravagance. Even though Warde did not solely focus on scientific discourse related to a healthy diet (or at least what was considered to be a healthy diet in the 1960s and the 1990s), the identification of the antinomy of health and indulgence did lead to revealing insights on this particular subject in popular media since the 1960s. On the one hand, the author stated that allusions to health increased during the period under investigation, due to increasing knowledge and a growing concern with weight and body control.

'In 1968 health was rarely alluded to in the cookery columns. In 1967–8 only 4 per cent of recipes were coded as having recommended food explicitly because it was healthy. [...] Even then, the references were scanty and tangential: honey was a healthy ingredient [...], bacon 'a protein food' [...]. Some time thereafter, concern for health escalated. The language of health came to permeate routine cookery articles and the recipe promotion devices. In the 1991–2 sample, 16 per cent of all recipes made explicit reference to health features in the food columns. The concern for health was partly instanced by the emergence of articles whose central identity was nutrition.' (Warde, 1997, pp. 79–80).

On the other hand, Warde discovered that the women's magazines progressively referred to indulgence as well: allusions to intemperance increased from 2 per cent in 1968 to 7 per cent in 1992. Moreover, the culinary section distinguished between several occasions when people overthrew a healthy diet and satisfied their cravings for tempting treats. Eating out and moments of emotional discomfort were identified as opportunities for indulgent eating behaviour and, interestingly, grandmother's dishes were often labelled as (emotional) comfort food. Did increasing appeals for indulgence correspond to a growing resistance to healthy eating or were both recommendations combined in one way or another?

Warde's antinomy of health and indulgence is an intriguing point of departure for an analysis of postwar scientific discourse on healthy diet and its translation into food recommendations and practices. How did the nutritional narratives develop after 1945 and were they converted into daily meal patterns and menus that could easily be understood and applied by housewives in their own kitchen? The answer to this question will be based on an investigation of the culinary pages published in the Belgian Farmer Women's Association's monthly magazine.

The Belgian Farmer Women's Association (BFWA) was founded in 1907 as the female counterpart to the Belgian Farmers'

Association and in reaction to the formation of several women's organisations in the city. It was – and still is – a Christian-inspired organisation that mainly enlisted its members in Flanders, even though the BFWA's name had a national appeal. The BFWA was originally involved in the promotion of farmer women's agricultural activities on the one hand, and the stimulation of technological improvements that alleviated housewives' work on the farm and in the household on the other hand. In order to promote technological improvements amongst its members, the BFWA published a monthly magazine that appeared regularly from 1909 onwards. In 1922, 35,000 editions were published, and by 1961 the periodical had reached a capacity of no less than 135,000 copies. At first, the magazine was titled *De Boerin* (*The Farmer's Wife*) and presented not only articles on agriculture and labour-saving farming techniques, but also pieces on education, household organisation and cooking. In 1949, *De Boerin* changed its name to *Bij de Haard* (*Around the Fireplace*) and instantly implemented a content shift that was characterised by a strong focus on household issues: cooking, education, interior design and fashion became central themes. In a later period, the magazine even included articles on national and/or international politics, feminism, youth problems and the like.

The content shift that portrayed *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* between 1945 and 1960 was undeniably aimed at the broadening of its readership. At first – when agriculture still dominated economic life in Flanders – the magazine only addressed farmer women, but by the end of the 1940s, and certainly during the 1950s and 1960s when agriculture's economic pole position was gradually taken over by the tertiary sector, the BFWA's membership became increasingly diversified and started to include women who were not involved in farming activities but employed in the service sector. Consequently, the magazine became widely spread in Flanders and gained social importance in the countryside and the city. Throughout the years, the nutritional information given in *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* reached an ever-growing and diversified audience and therefore, the monthly magazine provides an adequate source to investigate popular discourse on nutrition, health and indulgence in Flanders after World War II (Dekeyser, Opdeweegh, & van der Velden, 1999; Floré, 2006; Flour, Gubin, Jacques, Marissal, & Van Molle, 1994; Segers, Van Molle, & Vanpaemel, 2004).

*De Boerin/Bij de Haard's* culinary pages regularly appeared from 1909 up until today. Through these pages the BFWA wanted to offer its members advice on simple, nourishing and ready-to-use recipes. Interestingly, the authors who wrote these culinary pages were expected to remain anonymous. The editorial group, that mainly consisted of (farmer) women who were married to notable members of the Belgian Farmers' Association, wanted to offer its readers a homogenous magazine constructed on the principle of 'team spirit', and as a result, it did not tolerate individual limelight. Besides the nonappearance of authors' names, the absence of 'experts' in articles characterised by some sort of scientific content is striking. Not once does *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* mention a doctor, nutritionist or dietician in its articles on nutrition, health and/or indulgence (Dekeyser et al., 1999; Segers, 2005). An analysis of home economics textbooks revealed similar results, but a straightforward explanation for the phenomenon is not at hand (Scholliers, 2010). Finally, the cookery section closely followed societal changes, as can be illustrated by the growing number of articles on the use of kitchen appliances in the 1950s and 1960s, or the increasing number of exotic recipes in the 1960s and 1970s due to the growing importance of foreign cuisines in Flanders in that period (Scholliers & Geyzen, 2010; Segers, 2005).

The selection of appropriate articles was based on a quantitative content analysis and on the consideration of Warde's antinomy of health and indulgence. All culinary articles were

coded based on their main subject: recipe pages received a different code from articles on, for example, preservation techniques, while articles on nutrition were given their own specific code. Consequently, it was possible to easily pick out those issues that focused on nutritional knowledge, health and/or indulgence: 140 pages mentioned nutritional advice in one way or another, while 74 touched upon indulgence. These articles were eventually subjected to a qualitative content analysis, i.e. a more intensive way of reading the text, paying attention to concepts and categories that structure it. Both quantitative and qualitative content analysis present a suitable method to investigate the core problem presented in this research, namely whether or not a translation of nutritional knowledge into comprehensible food practices took place in *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*. An analysis of the factual implementation of dietary guidelines presented in this monthly magazine would require other source material and a different methodology and will not be considered in the following paragraphs.

## Dietary recommendations and food practices

### Health

Food production and provisions worldwide were heavily afflicted by World War II and, as a result, governments engaged in the implementation of food rationing systems that regulated supply and demand of the most essential, yet scarce foodstuffs (Bentley, 1998; Moskoff, 1990; Taithe, 1999; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2000). Belgium also, suffered from turbulent food provisioning problems. On the one hand, the Allied Powers' continental blockade deprived Belgium of important transatlantic grain imports on which the country so intensely depended. On the other hand, the German occupiers confiscated large quantities of Belgian food resources and thus contributed to the tempestuous food shortages. Consequently, the Belgian government was forced to implement a food rationing system that – at least in theory – had to ensure sufficient food supplies for the Belgian population during the war. On 11 May 1940, monthly rationing tables regulated the population's diet and strictly conditioned the consumption of several essential foodstuffs, like bread, flour, potatoes, sugar, dairy products, meat, salt and coffee (Dumoulin, Gerard, Van den Wijngaert, & Dujardin, 2005; Henau & Van den Wijngaert, 1986; Velaers & Van Goethem, 1994).

The system of daily allowances imposed thorough adaptations on the daily menu of the Belgians who, under normal circumstances, favoured a high consumption of salt, meat and sweet cakes and pastry. While pre- and postwar cookbooks presented a high number of meat and sweet recipes, textbooks for home economics classes, cookbooks and women's magazines published during World War II, taught women how to cook appetising meals by taking into consideration the scarce availability of the above-mentioned ingredients. Moreover, these media strongly emphasised the importance of foodstuffs that were not rationed, such as vegetables and fruits. In 1942, for example, the famous chef Gaston Clément issued *Ons Oorlogskookboekje* (*Our Little Wartime Cookbook*) in which he replaced familiar meat dishes with high-protein vegetable recipes (Niesten et al., 2002a).

During the immediate years after World War II, rationing systems continued to influence cookbooks and women's magazines all over the world (den Hartog, 1997; Mitchell, 2008; Wildt, 2001). In Belgium, the tables of daily allowances dissolved on 31 December 1948 and up until that time, the culinary pages of *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* forcefully took the food shortages into consideration and, consequently, bore witness to both ingredient and nutrient deficits. In April 1945, some fruit preserving recipes reflected the general sugar shortage in Europe. In order to

overcome the lack of sugar, the usual cooking time and sugar quantity that were needed to make jam and marmalade were adjusted. However, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* tried to make a virtue of necessity by enlightening its readers on the healthy outcomes of these new recipes. The article made clear that the nutrient content of fruits benefitted from the reduced cooking time and amount of sugar. Unfortunately, it did not clarify the preserves' nutritional value for human health (*De Boerin*, April 1945, p. 8).

A similar article on salt consumption, published in August 1945, regretted the Flemings' preference for salty food and explained how abundant consumption could affect liver and kidneys. Again, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* exploited the wartime shortages in order to convince its readers of the healthy effects of lowered salt consumption, but no thorough explanation was given (*De Boerin*, August 1945, p. 12). Besides sugar and salt shortages, the magazine also commented on the insufficient coal provisions during and after World War II and its consequences for the preparation of hot meals. In 1945–1946, the magazine lamented the lack of coal and presented several recipes that did not ask for a high-energy input. Consequently, the use of fresh, uncooked vegetables was heavily promoted: 'Our strong women know that uncooked vegetables are healthy, all nutrient components remain intact, they are tasty and do not ask for a lot of preparation time' (*De Boerin*, July 1947, p. 10).

Up until the end of 1948, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* persevered with its vegetable campaign and increasingly emphasised the importance of vegetables for a healthy diet. In the spring edition of 1948, the magazine warmly welcomed the seasonal vegetables and celebrated their high content of vitamin C and minerals, while teaching its readers how to compose a balanced daily menu. Interestingly, the guidelines only instructed that, in order to even out the menu, foodstuffs with a low nutrient content needed to be combined with ingredients with high nutritional value. Yet, the housewife was never informed of what ingredients were respectively considered to be nutrient-poor or nutrient-rich (*De Boerin*, April 1948, pp. 7–9).

During the immediate years after the dissolution of the rationing system in 1948, it became clear that *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*'s readers did not always follow the dietary recommendations that were given during the rationing period. Consequently, the BFWA continued its vegetable campaign and tried to convince Flemings of these greens' nutritional value. In 1949, the magazine commented on the general unwillingness to follow the dietary instructions and it especially regretted the aversion for fresh, uncooked vegetables: 'People do not follow our advice. However, it is very healthy to eat fresh vegetables on a regular basis. They are very nutritious and very tasty' (*De Boerin*, May 1949, p. 10).

In the 1950s, the vague recommendations of the immediate postwar period made way for elaborate advice on the existence of nutrients and their importance for a healthy diet. In 1954, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* educated its readers on the significance of vitamins for human health. Each month was dedicated to a specific category: an article on vitamin A appeared in March, the April edition focused on vitamin B, and so on. Moreover, all articles followed an analogous structure: the introduction explained what vitamins were; an exhaustive overview of the bodily discomforts caused by vitamin insufficiencies followed; and finally, the conclusion translated the rather scientific explanations into dietary recommendations. For the first time, these recommendations instructed the housewife about the composition of a balanced, healthy diet. *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* explained that the daily menu should include two portions of vegetables, one egg or some cheese, three quarters of a litre of milk, some fruits and, once a week, liver had to be served (*Bij de Haard*, March–October 1954). However, the advice still lacked specificity as can be illustrated by the use of the terms 'some' and 'two portions'. How much did the vegetable portions weigh and how much cheese did *De Boerin/Bij*

*de Haard*'s readers have to provide in order to compose a healthy diet?

By 1956, once more, it became clear that the vegetable campaign was not very fruitful. *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* regretted the fact that Flemings still preferred their familiar, tasty, rather unhealthy meals, instead of eating intelligently and keeping the new nutritional knowledge and corresponding diet in mind. The article literally stated that 'us Flemings, we are known for our good food [...] and the tastiness of our dishes' (*Bij de Haard*, November 1956, p. 301). The quote primarily illustrates *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*'s Flemish character and also accounts for the central role of 'our' tasty dishes in Flemish food culture, meaning the omnipresence of meat menus and familiar, greasy recipes. However, the magazine – once again – tried to convince its readers of the nutrients' importance and scientific insights were translated into food practices. In order to eat and live healthily, one had to consume liver, fresh vegetables or fruits, and milk. In 1958, the translation became more specific in terms of cooking techniques: 'eat uncooked vegetables as much as possible; wash the vegetables before cutting them into pieces; do not soak the vegetables in water; do not add baking soda to the boiling water; afterwards, use the boiling water for sauce or soup, since it contains a lot of minerals and vitamins' (*Bij de Haard*, June 1956, p. 177). The overview clearly illustrated *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*'s preference for fresh, uncooked vegetables as the main component of a healthy diet. Not once did the article elaborate on healthy ways of meat preparation, and even fruits were rarely touched upon.

However, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard*'s positive vegetable representation did not instantaneously result into changing food practices in Flemish households, on the contrary. Flemings still preferred their familiar meat recipes. After all, food habits constitute a core aspect of people's culture and therefore, it is extremely hard to change their fundamental diet (Mintz, 2002). Could it be that the rather unspecific recommendations and the lack of clear translations into food practices on the one hand and Flemings' preference for meat dishes on the other hand, accounted for the farmer households' unwillingness to strictly follow the magazine's dietary advice?

Interestingly, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* did not only promote vegetables out of health concerns. The culinary pages also revealed traces of vehement agricultural politics aimed at upgrading Flemish produce. In 1952, the BFWA commented on increasing banana consumption in Flanders and very much regretted this new trend. The organisation immediately started a campaign meant to encourage the consumption of fruits grown on Flemish soil and, in order to be successful, the farmer women applied (or abused) a specific narrative characterised by a 'nutritive' vocabulary. The campaign advocated that 'bananas do not contain a lot of vitamins, while our own carrots contain a lot of vitamin C' (*Bij de Haard*, December 1952, p. 323) and whether this was true or not, nutrients were used to promote Flemish agriculture.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the milk campaign set up by the BFWA in order to counteract the unification of a European (agricultural) market and the growing import of French and Dutch dairy products in Flanders during the 1950s (Nielsen, Raymaekers, & Segers, 2002b). The BFWA stated that Flemish milk and derivatives did not have to make way for foreign products and started up a campaign to promote the consumption of Flemish dairy products in Flanders. When in 1954 the article series on vitamins mentioned the daily consumption of three quarters of a litre of milk and some cheese, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* hooked onto agricultural politics and used the nutritional value of milk and cheese to promote the dairy campaign (*Bij de Haard*, March–October 1954). In 1959, the recommendations on dairy intake became more specific, with exact rations per age category: children were to drink three quarters of a litre of milk per day, while adults



had to consume 500 g of milk, 100 g of butter and 30 g of cheese. At first sight, the article only seemed to concretise the food recommendations, but the conclusion spoke otherwise. 'The advice of the National Dairy Board must be followed: drink at least half a litre of milk per day!' (*Bij de Haard*, January 1959, p. 23). Naturally, the National Dairy Board was in charge of controlling and promoting Flemish milk production.

It has to be pointed out that similar scenarios surfaced in other countries as well, such as Norway during the 1930s. Inger Johanne Lyngø demonstrated that along with the restructuring of the milk-producing farms in that period came an overproduction of milk. The Norwegian government did not know what to do with the surpluses and in order to get rid of them new dietary guidelines included high milk consumption. Lyngø concluded by saying that: 'In this glass of milk the ideas of agricultural policy and new scientific knowledge were united' (Lyngø, 2001, p. 151). Of course, the relationship between agricultural politics and scientific knowledge requires more in-depth research in order to find out whether or not contradicting arguments existed besides the harmonious campaigns described above.

### Indulgence

In December 1948, when the rationing period was coming to an end, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* already started to show traces of indulgence by presenting several recipes for pancakes and waffles in order to celebrate Epiphany and the return of light into the dark winter days (*De Boerin*, January 1948, pp. 11–12). The festive tone used to refer to indulgence was immediately set. During festive months (Easter, Christmas, etc.), nutritional concerns were overthrown and fresh, uncooked vegetables seemed forgotten, while familiar meaty or sugary recipes came to the fore. In 1953, for example, mothers were advised to use the better parts of the pig in order to prepare a delicious Communion meal for their children (*Bij de Haard*, March 1953, pp. 81–82). Easter menus always consisted of various courses, including egg and meat dishes (e.g. a beef stew with wine in 1953) and a creamy cake as dessert (*Bij de Haard*, April 1953, pp. 103–104). A list of some Christmas dishes throughout the period 1945–1960 is illustrative of the festive character of indulgence as well: butter cream, duck with brandy, cookies baked in butter, vol-au-vent, roasted duck or goose, asparagus cream soup, chocolate mousse, and of course the 'typical' Christmas cake (*Bij de Haard*, December 1946–1960).

When referring to indulgence, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* occasionally mentioned the word 'tradition' and thus combined both concepts into one occasion. Considering the hint of familiarity that comes along with allusions to tradition and Flemings' fondness of familiar meat dishes, the mentioning of culinary treats almost never took into account the health campaign with its preference for raw, uncooked vegetables. The 1953 Easter menu illustrates this perfectly. The recipe pages informed readers that the festive meal would be inconceivable without the traditional egg and lamb dishes, and correspondingly presented several recipes containing these ingredients accompanied by butter and heavy gravy. Vegetables, however, were not mentioned. Did the references to indulgence jeopardise the effectiveness of scientific discourse and its translation into food practices? Not necessarily, since both types of recipe recommendations could be combined in one way or another. During the 'normal' months of the year, a healthy diet needed to be followed, while festive occasions could be celebrated with less healthy but familiar menus. Rumm-Kreuter (2000) came to a similar conclusion when analysing contemporary cooking habits in Northern and Mediterranean Europe, explaining that, when people have the time, as during holidays, they are not concerned about healthiness and instead turn to old customs and habits and treat themselves with customary dishes and food preparations.

These findings, however, do not add up with Warde's identification of indulgence in British women's magazines. The element of familiarity certainly converges in both cases, with so-called traditional dishes in Flanders and grandmother's cooking in Great Britain, but the occasions in which indulgence is allowed, diverge. *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* only mentioned culinary treats within a festive context, while the British magazines referred to eating out and moments of emotional discomfort as opportunities for indulgent eating behaviour. I argue that the period under investigation can be pointed out as main factor for this dissimilarity. After all, it was only from the 1970s onwards that Belgium/Flanders developed a restaurant culture and an interest in eating out for pleasure (Scholliers, 2008) and, most probably, an analysis of later editions of *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* will come up with similar findings to Warde's research. Today, producers, marketers and consumers even envisage with great zest the combination of health and indulgence in one product, as shown by advertisements for pleasurable yoghurts, chocolate cereal or low-fat candy bars (Heller, 2010). Apparently, according to recent dietary guidelines (or rather marketing techniques?), it is possible to pay attention to a healthy diet and enjoy food at the same time.

### Conclusion: a balanced diet with vegetables and indulgent treats

The cookery columns published in *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* during the immediate postwar years were strongly influenced by the effects of wartime rationing and shortages. *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* used these disadvantages and turned them into educational dietary advice, stressing the positive health effects of lowered sugar and salt consumption. Thus, present-day recommendations on moderate salt and sugar consumption found their origins in the immediate postwar years, when daily menus were adapted to wartime shortages. The question at stake is whether or not housewives abided by the new dietary rules. The insufficient coal provisioning, in turn, led to the promotion of fresh, uncooked vegetables and the celebration of their nutrient content. If there had not been a coal insufficiency, would *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* still have promoted the use of uncooked greens? Of course, the nutrient content of the vegetables was expressed, but in the end, not one pre-1950s article explained more thoroughly what vitamins and minerals were.

During the 1950s, the culinary pages gained in precision and demonstrated the emergence of the translation of scientific discourse into sensible food practices that could be used in order to compose a balanced daily menu. A whole series of articles explained the function and importance of vitamins to a healthy diet, but the advice still lacked in specificity. Moreover, while *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* still focused heavily on vegetables, the magazine also commented on the fact that Flemings were unwilling to eat fresh vegetables and still preferred their familiar meat dishes. A combination of on the one hand the rather unspecific recommendations, and on the other hand Flemings' cultural taste and preferences for meat dishes, most probably accounted for Flemish households' unwillingness to strictly follow the magazine's dietary advice. Interestingly, the dietary recommendations were also heavily influenced by agricultural politics promoting the consumption of produce grown by Flemish farmers. How else could the banana boycott and the predominance of milk in the daily-recommended menus be explained?

Finally, *De Boerin/Bij de Haard* did not only focus on healthy food recommendations, but also allowed indulgence. Festive occasions could be celebrated with less healthy but familiar dishes often considered traditional.

The main question, then, worthy of future investigation is how discourse developed after the 1960s, when diseases of affluence

surfaced and scientists discovered new nutritional facts about saturated and unsaturated fats, cholesterol, the effects of sports, etc. And the related sub-questions: Did the translation into food practices become more specific? Did recommendations focus even more on fresh, uncooked vegetables? Were festive indulgences still allowed or did heart and coronary diseases call for strict, non-fat menus? Did occasional treats become off-limits, while scientific discourse permeated the culinary columns? Did familiar meaty dishes become taboo in terms of health concerns? To conclude: based on the above paragraphs, it may carefully be suggested that dietary recommendations in women's magazines became more precise throughout the years, but that they did not always result into changing food practices in Flemish households, due to the persistence of solid culinary habits.

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